

# Moscow is not winning Africa

By Elizabeth Valkenier

With the step-up of great-power rivalry in Africa, charges are made that the USSR is engaged in an all-out drive to gain exclusive control of the continent's abundant resources. Are the charges true?

The fact is that the limited success of Soviet attempts to expand bilateral activities in Africa and new thinking in Moscow about the global nature of international economic relations have had a profound effect on Soviet economic behavior in Africa. On the one hand, the USSR continues to seek economic advantage. On the other, the notion of denying Africa's resources to the West has clearly been dropped.

In matters of aid the Soviets keep attending to their own needs first and display a singular unwillingness to render large-scale assistance to the devastated and backward economies of southern Africa. Thus, of the \$2.7 billion in aid granted between 1975-1979, \$2 billion was earmarked for the development of phosphate deposits in Morocco to be shipped to the USSR to increase the production of critically needed fertilizers. And only one-third of a billion was granted to sub-Saharan Africa, where the former Portuguese colonies and the majority of the socialist states are located.

At the same time there has been a profound change of Soviet attitude toward the role of capitalism and of the Western presence in engendering growth. The USSR no longer sees its own and Africa's interests in terms of introducing socialist economic management and of ousting the West. Current Soviet development theory does not regard backwardness as an asset permitting a speedy transition to socialism. Instead, it stresses the sequential nature of growth as well as the material prerequisites essential for steady and genuine progress.

As for the Western presence, Soviet specialists now recognize its benefits to development. Whereas once there was an exclusive concern with the economic rights of the less-developed countries vs. the West, the argument has now shifted to stressing that in business deals the interests of both parties have to be properly safeguarded.

There is hardly any talk these days of the socialist international division of labor. The Russians boast of how many African countries have chosen the path of "socialist orientation." In order to bolster their claims that socialism has become the prevailing historical force. But they are careful to point out that, as far as the economies of these countries are concerned, they remain part of the capitalist world market.

On pragmatic issues, Soviet leaders have resisted the pressures from some of the impoverished radical African states for admission to Comecon, the East-bloc economic grouping. At various seminars organized for African leftists and administrators, Soviet lecturers tell their audiences to take "advantage" of Western business offers, to recognize that private enterprise can play a "positive" role in development, and to conduct their economic policies with "global equilibrium" in mind.

The smooth operation of the world economy, in which the industrialized and the developing nations each and all play a constructive role, is of great concern to Soviet economists. So much so that they are critical of the African theories of "self-reliance," since they smack of autarky that would deny or curtail Africa's resources to all the industrialized countries.

Of course, it is perfectly legitimate to argue that the current Soviet line on the Western presence, capitalist institutions, and interdependence is nothing but a self-serving tactic to buy time and eventually to gain easier access to Africa's markets and resources. Undoubtedly, this might be the rationalization among some Soviet leaders for the retreat on the economic front.

But given the incontrovertible fact that the Soviets are now acting from a position of weakness, it is also legitimate to ask: How feasible is an eventual attainment of economic domination of Africa?

It is fair to assume that the technological lead the West enjoys over the East will not be eliminated and that Moscow will never be able to compete effectively either in the quality, range, or amounts of goods, services, and funds essential for Africa's development and trade. And even as the USSR becomes economically stronger, the steady progress of global interdependence is such as to make it increasingly impossible for any single country to dominate the economy of any continent.

Finally, one cannot obliterate from the various scenarios about Africa's future the fact that these countries do not wish to be dominated by any power and are increasingly capable of enforcing their wishes on both East and West.

Addressing the more immediate future, one has to conclude that Soviet economic penetration of Africa simply cannot be as purposeful, successful, and malevolent as the conventional wisdom would have it. Its demonstrable weakness imposes definite constraints on the capacity of the USSR to dominate or to utilize Africa's resources in the overall competition with the West. Moscow has reaped numerous benefits from rendering diplomatic and military support to African states. This support has been crucial in assuring the victory of particular leaders or factions in the national liberation movements. It has also been effective in the consolidation of power by new regimes.

But such support is insufficient in helping these regimes to turn to the next task — the reconstruction and the development of their national economies — and hampers Moscow's ability to continue dominating the situation.

What kind of a pro-Soviet, Marxist-Leninist regime can there be in Ethiopia, Angola, or Mozambique when the bulk of foreign aid and investment comes from the industrialized capitalist nations? Or when their "comrades" in the Kremlin refuse to recognize these self-proclaimed socialists as leading full-fledged socialist states, advise them not to count on "socialist solidarity" but to rely on Western

assistance, and lecture them on the dangers of prematurely creating socialist institutions while lauding the benefits of a mixed economy?

The current Soviet behavior as well as perceptions of Africa's problems and their own economic capabilities, create opportune openings for Western action. The capacity and the willingness of the United States and other industrialized countries to provide the resources for the peaceful stage of nation-building in Africa can undermine the close ties between the African radicals and Moscow created by and based on military dependence.

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## ZIMBABWE SAYS ALL EX-GUERRILLAS (Continued)

speeded the disarmament process. About 300 people were killed in the fighting, which temporarily set back prospects for foreign investment. An angry Mugabe ordered the disarmament and told "all who challenge the authority of my government" that "I am determined to descend on them with a hammer."

Completion of the disarmament does not end Zimbabwe's military difficulties. The key problem is the integration of the two former guerrilla armies and the former Rhodesian security forces into a unified national Army.

Mnangagwa estimated that the total number of armed forces in the three groups, including guerrillas still being trained outside the country, is 65,000. Upward of 30,000 former guerrillas have been integrated with about 5,000 of the security forces.

THE NEW YORK TIMES  
MAY 21, 1981

## 34 Sudanese Officers Are Retired In Crackdown on the Opposition

KHARTOUM, the Sudan, May 20 (AP) — Thirty-four Sudanese Army officers have been pensioned off after a purge of an unspecified number of Government employees, official sources said today. President Gaafar al-Nimeiry said recently that a "purge would continue against antiregime elements, the corrupt and the incompetents."

The Sudanese press agency said the officers had been given a sendoff party by Vice President Abdel Magid Hamid Khalil.

The Kuwaiti newspaper Al Watan said on Saturday that 2,700 Sudanese civil servants had been dismissed and that 37 ranking army officers had been retired in a crackdown on opposition elements.



OTR/006/0045/37

When in charge, ponder  
When in trouble, delegate  
When in doubt, mumble